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Book Review: *Owls of the United States and Canada: A Complete Guide to Their Biology and Behavior* By Wayne Lynch

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Owls of the United States and Canada: A Complete Guide to Their Biology and Behavior. By Wayne Lynch. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007. xx + 242 pp. Photographs, appendix, references, index. \$39.95 cloth.

Wayne Lynch, one of Canada's premier wildlife photographers, is also the author of a dozen wonderfully illustrated natural history books as well as a retired physician. As such, one might not expect from him an authoritative book on owls. Yet here is a volume both satisfying in its up-to-date and accurate information on owl biology and dazzling with nearly 200 of what are probably the most spectacular color photos of owls ever assembled. All of these are his own, and almost all illustrate wild, unrestrained birds in their native habitats. Simply to say they are stunning is to understate his achievement.

Lynch's photographs, the heart of the book, deserve special attention. All nineteen of the owls of the U.S. and Canada are illustrated photographically, each accompanied by a thumbnail descriptive sketch and range map. The great majority of the photos, however, depict the owls found primarily at high latitudes, especially such spectacular northern species as the snowy owl, great gray owl, boreal owl, and northern hawk owl. Great gray owls and great horned owls are particularly well represented by photos, including many charming shots of nesting birds and their wide-eyed downy nestlings. More than 20 images are memorable full-page plates; there is also a haunting two-page spread of a snowy owl on an unbroken snowy landscape. Any wildlife photographer can come away with only undiluted envy and great professional respect after seeing such fine work.

Although the text is partly written as a first-person narrative, most of it is a succinct, interesting summary of comparative owl biology, rather than a series of individual species accounts, which tend to repeat already available information. In-text literature citations aren't used, but the authors of major research findings are identified and their work referenced in a literature section with nearly 300 citations, some published as recently as 2005.

I have more than a dozen owl books on my office bookshelves, a testimony to their popularity among both biologist-authors and the reading public, but probably none is so attractive and accessibly informative as this one. Through the work of missionaries such as Wayne Lynch and Robert Nero, the Canadian public's understanding of and appreciation for owls has been greatly improved, to the point that three of Canada's ten provinces have selected owls for their provincial emblems. As one who has seen dozens of wounded and dead owls senselessly and illegally shot by Nebraska hunters, I find some hope in the efforts of such eloquent Canadian spokesmen for the survival of these wonderful birds. **Paul A. Johnsgard**, *School of Biological Sciences, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*.